

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /067 W

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R 240405Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7784

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0379

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS EIND ETRN LA

SUBJECT: CONDITIONS IN LUANG PRABANG

1. AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN IN LPDR FRANK MANLEY TOLD EMBOFF THAT TWO VEHICLES HE OWNED WERE RECENTLY DRIVEN BACK ON ROUTE 13 FROM LUANG PRABANG TO VIENTIANE WITHOUT INCIDENT. MANLEY'S LAO ASSISTANT CHANSY HAD TO SPEND TWO WEEKS IN LUANG PRABANG, HOWEVER, TO GET THE VEHICLES BACK FROM THE LAO AUTHORITIES WHO HAD REQUISITIONED THEM. CHANSY SAID THAT ALTHOUGH PRIVATE VEHICLES COULD GET TROUGH TO VIENTIANE, RESISTANCE FORCES PREVENTED ARMY AND OTHER OFFICIAL VEHICLES FROM DOING SO. (FRENCH SOURCE REPORTED SEPARATELY THAT INSURGENTS ATTACKED OFFICIAL CONVOY AT KASSY IN RECENT WEEKS.)

2. CHANSY NOTED THAT SUFFICIENT GASOLINE WAS BROUGHT IN BY ROAD FROM VIENTIANE TO LUANG PRABANG AND SOLD FOR 300 KIP PER LITER COMPARED TO THE OFFICIAL PRICE OF 60
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KIP IN VIENTIANE.

3. CHANSY TOLD MANLEY THAT HE SAW THE FORMER KING AND CROWN PRINCE WITH FACES TANNED FROM THE SUN WORKING IN A VEGETABLE GARDEN AT THEIR HOME. HE ADDED THAT THE KING AND CROWN PRINCE WERE CONFINED TO THEIR HOME AND WERE NO LONGER PERMITTED TO VISIT THE LOCAL BUDDHIST

TEMPLES. ONLY THE FORMER QUEEN AND PRINCESS WERE ALLOWED TO LEAVE HOMETO DO DAILY SHOPPING. CHANSY SAID THAT THE NEW REGIME WAS FEARFUL THAT RESISTANCE FORCES MIGHT "LIBERATE" THE KING AND SPIRIT HIM AWAY TO THAILAND.

4. CHANSY FURTHER NOTED THAT THE ETHNIC CHARACTER OF LUANG PRABANG HAD CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY DURING THE PAST YEAR. HE OBSERVED THAT MOST LOWLAND LAO AND CHINESE MERCHANTS HAD LEFT THE CITY FOR VIENTIANE AND PROBABLY ONWARD FLIGHT TO THAILAND. THE REDUCED POPULATION REMAINING IN LUANG PRABANG CONSISTED MOSTLY OF HIGHLAND LAO AND A NEW GROUP OF CHINESE. CHANSY REPORTED THAT MOST OF THE CHINESE NOW IN LUANG PRABANG RECENTLY RE-SETTLED THERE FROM NORTHERN LAOS ALONG THE CHINESE BORDER AND WERE PURCHASING HOMES AND CARS WITH GOLD BARS.

5. CHANSY ALSO SPOKE TO SOME INDIAN MERCHANTS WHO BROUGHT GOODS FROM VIENTIANE TO SELL IN LUANG PRABANG SAYABOURY AND HOU EI SAI. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS REGULAR BUS SERVICE TO SAYABOURY TOWN FROM LUANG PRABANG. CORCORAN

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